**Lesson 7**

**The Holy Spirit Regenerating and Quickening**

We now come to an interesting section of Arthur Pink’s book . . . the two chapters on the subjects of **the regenerating and quickening ministries of the Holy Spirit.**

The first thing we must do as we begin this lesson is to define these terms. What is meant by the terms **regeneration** and **quickening**?

**Regeneration**— from the Greek word *paliggenesia*. A compound word from *palin*, meaning “again,” and *genesis*, meaning “birth, life and generation.”

* The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the word “generation” to mean “the action or process of producing offspring (procreation); the process of coming or bringing into being.”
* Thus the literal meaning of *paliggenesia* is “again birth,” “again life” or “again generation.”
* Thus the result of our **regeneration** is our being “born again.”

**Quickening**— from the Greek word *zōopoieō*, meaning “to make alive” or “give or impart life.”

* The term **quickening** has both a secular and a theological meaning.
* In the secular sense—
  + For those of you who are mothers, you probably recognize the term quickening as “the first motion of a fetus in the uterus felt by the mother.” Every mother remembers the sensation when she first feels the life of her child moving within her.
  + The Merriam-Webster dictionary also defines “quickening” in a stricter sense as “to come to life.”
* In the theological sense—
  + The direct and supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit in imparting spiritual life.

**What is the difference between the two terms?**

“In earlier years we did not ourselves perceive the distinction that is pointed by John 6:63 and 1 Peter 1:23— the former referring unto the initial act of the Spirit in “**quickening**” the spiritually dead soul, the latter having in view the consequent “**birth**” of the same.

***John 6:63— "It is the Spirit who gives life* [quickens]*; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.***

***1 Peter 1:23— for you have been born again* [regenerated] *not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.***

* “While it is freely allowed that the *origin* of the “new creature” is shrouded in impenetrable mystery, yet of this we may be certain, that **life precedes birth***.*
* There is a strict analogy between the natural birth and the spiritual. Necessarily so, for God is the Author of them both, and He ordained that the former should foreshadow the latter.
* Birth is neither the cause nor the beginning of life itself. Rather is it the **manifestation**of a life already existent. There had been a divine “quickening” before the child could issue from the womb.
* In like manner, the Holy Spirit “quickens” the soul, or imparts spiritual life to it, **before**its possessor is “brought forth.”

**Regeneration vs. Quickening**

“Different writers have employed the term “regeneration” with varying latitude: some restricting it unto a single act, others including the whole process by which one becomes a conscious child of God.” By his own admission, for many years Pink, himself, did not distinguish a difference between the terms “regeneration” and “quickening.”

* Regeneration is a term that describes **the process and** **result** of a new life being brought forth.
  + Regeneration begins when the new spiritual life is imparted by the Spirit, is then nurtured by the drawing of the Spirit, resulting in one being “converted” or “born again.”
* Quickening is the term that is descriptive of the **initial** **instantaneous event** in which spiritual life is imparted by the Holy Spirit to a “dead” soul.
  + Quickening is the imparting of spiritual life that **results in regeneration**

“The essential thing in our regeneration is the Spirit’s quickening of us into newness of life.” (Pink, *Studies in the Scriptures*, p.344)

**Quickening begins the process of Regeneration**

W. E. Best rightly says that quickening is not an experience but results in an experience. When a blind man is healed and given sight, he experiences seeing only when light is involved, not when he is healed.

**An examination of the importance of properly understanding Regeneration**

Arthur Pink begins the chapter on regeneration with the opening statement, “the absolute necessity for the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit in order for a sinner’s being converted to God lies in his being totally depraved.”

Why is the regenerating operation of the Holy Spirit an “absolute necessity” in order for a sinner to be saved?

* If all men are not totally depraved, if men are either inherently good or even inherently neutral by nature, **then self-regeneration would be possible**. And if self-regeneration is possible, then there is no need for Jesus Christ nor the Holy Spirit. But it is because we are totally depraved that we need the atoning blood of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in our regeneration.
* “Fallen man is completely under a contrary disposition. There is no right exercise of heart in him, but every motion of his will is corrupt and sinful. If this were not the case, there would be no need for him to be born again and made “a new creature. If the sinner were not wholly corrupt, he would submit to Christ without any supernatural operation of the Spirit. But fallen man is so completely sunk in corruption that he has not the faintest real desire for God, but is filled with enmity against Him (Rom 8:7).”

Why can any fallen descendant of Adam never spiritually receive Christ as His Lord and Master, and savingly believe on His name without the work of the Holy Spirit? Pink lists 3 reasons.

**1. “It is not because grace runs in the blood.”** In other words, salvation is not genetic. The Jews believe that they are saved because they are physical descendants of Abraham. But genetics mean nothing. Jews are just as depraved as Gentiles. We all require the work of the Holy Spirit in regenerating us in order to be saved.

**2. “It is not because of any natural willingness, as Arminians contend.”** Total depravity means that every inclination of our natural heart and every exercise of our fallen will is in opposition to God. The natural man will never be willing to believe.

**3. “The new birth is not brought about by the power and influence of others.”** In other words, it is not by persuasive speech that any are saved. Salvation is not dependent nor influenced by the eloquence of the gospel preacher. Only the Holy Spirit can change the dead heart. Charles Finney and Billy Graham and many other evangelists believe that salvation is a matter of persuasion . . . have a good presentation. But the most polished presentation is of no effect without the work of the Holy Spirit.

**Regeneration Is the Sole Work of the Spirit**

“In regeneration, **one of God’s elect is the subject** and **the Spirit of God is the sole agent**. The subject of the new birth is wholly passive: he does not act but is acted upon.”

Why is this statement so important to the understanding of the doctrines of grace?

* The sovereign work of the Spirit in the soul precedes all holy exercises of heart, such as sorrow for sin, faith in Christ, love toward God. This great change is wrought in spite of all the opposition of the natural heart against God.

***“So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.” (Rom 9:16).***

* Because all men are passive in the process of salvation, there can be no action that we take to save ourselves. Despite what the Arminians believe, we do not save ourselves or even cooperate with the Holy Spirit in our salvation. It is all the work of the Spirit in us.
* “Furthermore, this great change is not a gradual and protracted process but is instantaneous. In an instant of time the favored subject of it passes from death unto life.”

At regeneration “**no new faculties are created**, but instead, the powers of the soul are spiritualized and made alive unto God, fitted to enjoy God and hold communion with Him. Regeneration consists in a radical change of heart, for there is implanted a new disposition as the foundation of all holy exercises.”

* The statement that “no new faculties are created” is important because it teaches us that nothing changes, physically, in the new believer. We are exactly the same before and after our regeneration. That which is changed is spiritual, not physical.
* As Pink states, because no new faculties are created in the regenerated believer, the fact that an unbeliever can become a believer is solely **a result of the Holy Spirit making the unwilling heart willing** and giving the natural man the ability to understand supernatural things.
* Just as Elisha’s servant was only able to see the chariots of fire all around Elisha after Elisha prayed and asked God to open his servant’s eyes, so the natural man is unable to discern spiritual things because they are foolishness to him.

***2 Kings 6:17— Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha***

**Manifestations of Regeneration**

Pink points to three ways in which new believers are changed at our regeneration.

**Holiness—** “Holiness in the heartis the main and ultimate birth brought forth in regeneration, for to make us partakers of God’s holiness is the sum and scope of His gracious purpose toward us.”

* The Holy Spirit imparts to every regenerated believer a desire and hunger for holiness. As grateful new sons and daughters, we desire to be obedient to God and to glorify Him in any way we can.

**Power—** “There is a great display of God’s *power* in our regeneration. Because the work of regeneration is accomplished in an instant, as seen in the dying thief and Paul, and often accomplished (apparently) by a few words from one frail mortal falling on the ears of another, we are apt to lose sight of the omnipotent working of the Holy Spirit in the performing thereof. Indeed, the Spirit so graciously hides the exceeding greatness of His power working in sinners’ hearts that *His* might is inadequately recognized, owned, and adored by us.”

* One of the greatest of all mysteries is how the Holy Spirit changes us and makes us spiritually alive . . . an act that can only be accomplished by the Omnipotent God . . . and we can’t even feel it or recognize it. Infinite power exercised without being seen or noticed. Yet it is the infinite power of the Holy Spirit that saves us.

**Love—** “Not only is there a wondrous exhibition of His power when the Spirit regenerates a soul, but there is also a blessed manifestation of His *love.* In the exercise of His gracious office towards God’s elect and in His work in them, the Holy Spirit proves that His love toward the heirs of glory is ineffable and incomprehensible.”

* “It is because His work is *within* us that we are more apt to overlook Him*,* and are prone to neglect the giving to Him the glory which is distinctly His due, and most sadly do we fail to praise and adore Him for His gracious work in us.”
* The Holy Spirit loves each of us because of the love the Triune God has for themselves. And despite the fact that the Holy Spirit loves us with a Fatherly tenderness, we can’t even perceive Him and so we fail to worship Him and give Him glory for His work in us.

Describing the role of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of unbelievers, Pink states “the Father’s election and the Son’s redemption, with all the unspeakable blessings thereof, remained for a season quite unknown to us. In our fallen, sinful state we all once lay “dead in trespasses and sins,” without hope. To bring us out of this state and raise us from a death of sin into a life of righteousness, is the great and grand work reserved for the Holy Spirit, in order to display and make manifest thereby His love for us.”

**An examination of the importance of properly understanding Quickening**

Arthur Pink draws an important distinction between the terms **“quickening”** and **“birth”** in regard to new Christians. Specifically, Pink states that “life precedes birth.” What does Pink say is the difference between “quickening” and “birth”?

* **Quickening** is “the origin of the “new creature” and is shrouded in impenetrable mystery.”
* **Quickening is the impartation of spiritual life unto a dead soul**.
* On the other hand, “birth is neither the cause nor the beginning of life itself; rather it is the manifestation of a life already existent.”

In other words, **spiritual** **quickening is analogous to physical conception**, while **spiritual birth is analogous to physical birth**. We are physically born 9 months after our lives begin in the womb. In the same way, we are spiritually born at a time after our spiritual quickening. We don’t know the time of our quickening, only that it had to occur before we could be born.

**What is the role of the Holy Spirit in quickening?**

The role of the Holy Spirit in our quickening is that “quickening is the initial operation of the Spirit.”

* Quickening is a **direct**operation of the Spirit without the use of any instrument.
* The soul is quickened unto spiritual life solely by the **direct** and **supernatural** operation of the Spirit, without any medium or means whatsoever.
  + Spiritual life is communicated to the soul without the assistance or cooperation of man. Man, who is dead in his trespasses and sins, has no ability to affect the generation of spiritual life any more than a corpse has the ability to generate physical life.

**First the Work of the Spirit, Then the Word**

Under the guise of honoring the written Word, many have (no doubt unwittingly) dishonored the Holy Spirit.

* The idea that seems to prevail in “orthodox” circles today is that all which is needed for the salvation of souls is to give out the Word in its purity, God being pledged to bless the same
* Many suppose that the Scriptures are quite sufficient of themselves to communicate light to those in darkness and life to those who are dead in sins. But the spiritually dead are able to quicken themselves to life no more than a blind man is able to will himself the ability to see.

Nevertheless, while the direct and supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit is the sole source of spiritual life, the Word of God is instrumental in the process of regeneration.

* ***1 Peter 1:23—*** ***for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.***
* It is the word of God that activates the spiritual life that has been created in the new believer. Just as birth pains activate the process of physical birth, so the new creation’s response to the word of God is what activates the birth of the new believer. And just as milk sustains the life of a new-born human child, so the nourishment of the word of God is what sustains the new spiritual child of God.
* **“New life is not imparted because man perceives the truth, but he perceives the truth because the new life is imparted.”**

**Question:** If true, that the soul is quickened unto spiritual life solely by the direct and supernatural operation of the Spirit, without any medium or means whatsoever, and that the truth cannot be perceived until new life is first imparted . . . what is the purpose of evangelism?

**Reply:** If it is accurate, that the average Christian has heard the gospel an average of seven times before receiving Christ, why did it take so long? Were the presentations poor? Was he or she not sufficiently persuaded by the presentation? No. It’s because the Holy Spirit had not yet quickened them unto spiritual life and given them the ability to hear and believe. As Pink states, “men are not “quickened” **by** the Word, they must be quickened **in order to** receive and understand the Word.”

The Word is the instrument by which men come to know the gospel, but the Spirit must first give us the ability to receive and believe.

***Romans 10:14-17— 14 How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? 15 How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!" 16 However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, who has believed our report?" 17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.***

**Five characteristics of the Holy Spirit’s quickening activity**

**1. It is sovereign**

The sovereignty of God is at the heart of salvation. In His electing unto salvation, God is the sole source of salvation. God chooses whom He will save. And having been chosen by the Father and redeemed by the Son, at the appointed time the Holy Spirit imparts new life to the dead soul. Man has no part in the process except to supply the dead vessel into which the Spirit comes to dwell. As Pink states, “He is above any obligation to the creature.”

**2. It is an act of amazing grace**

“The sinner, who is the chosen subject of this divine operation and object of this inestimable blessing, is infinitely ill-deserving in himself, being thoroughly disposed to go on in wickedness till this change is wrought in him. He is rebellious, and will not hearken to the divine command; he is obstinate and refuses to repent and embrace the gospel. However terrified he may be with the fears of threatened doom, however earnest may be his desire to escape misery and be happy for- ever, no matter how many prayers he may make and things he may do, he has not the least inclination to repent and submit to God. His heart is defiant, full of enmity against God, and daily does he add iniquity unto iniquity. For the Spirit to give a new heart unto such an one is indeed an act of amazing and sovereign grace!”

**3. It is instantaneous**

“It is a divine act and not a process; it is wrought at once, and not gradually. In a moment of time the soul passes from death unto life. The soul that before was dead toward God, is now alive to Him. The soul that was completely under the domination of sin, is now set free.”

**4. It is entirely unperceived by us**

“It lies outside the realm and the range of human consciousness. Those who are dead possess no perception, and though the work of bringing them onto resurrection ground is indeed a great and powerful one, in the very nature of the case its subjects can know nothing whatever about it until after it has been accomplished. When Adam was created, he was conscious of nothing but that he now existed and was free to act: the divine operation that was the cause of his existence was over and finished before he began to be conscious of anything. This initial operation of the Spirit by which the elect become new creatures can only be known by its effects and consequences.”

Again, this reinforces the truth that we were neither in control nor even aware of the life imparted within us until much later.

**5. We are entirely passive**

“There is no cooperation whatever between the will of the sinner and the act of the Holy Spirit. The sinner must be entirely passive, like clay in the hands of a potter, for until divine grace is exerted upon him he is utterly incapable of any spiritual acts, being dead in trespasses and sins. Lazarus co-operated not in his resurrection: he knew not that the Savior had come to his sepulcher to deliver him from death. Such is the case with each of God’s elect when the Spirit commences to deal with them. They must first be quickened into newness of life before they can have the slightest desire or motion of the will toward spiritual things.”

**Question:** If it is true, that men are entirely passive in their receiving spiritual life, how should this effect our approach to evangelism?

**Reply:** Such truth should free us from the fear of failure. If we teach someone the gospel and they don’t respond as we hope, the failure is not ours. The reality is, a dead person cannot respond to the words of life without the Holy Spirit first quickening them to spiritual life.

**The indwelling of the Holy Spirit**

The question arises concerning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit during the process of regeneration. We have learned in this lesson that **quickening** is the first event in the process of regeneration. The next step in the process (which we will cover in a few weeks) is the process of the Spirit **drawing**. The drawing of the Spirit is an act of power, but not of force. The drawing power of the Spirit makes the unwilling heart willing. Then, finally, having been drawn to Christ, the process is complete when the new creation believes and is **born again**.

But if the process of regeneration is not complete until we are converted (born again), **when does the Holy Spirit come to indwell the new creation?**

Since we do not have the ability to mortify sin and subdue the evils in our souls without the Spirit, it is of necessity that when the Holy Spirit quickens the dead soul that He comes to indwell that soul. Without the power of the Holy Spirit no one can be preserved in a state of grace.